DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 565 CS 217 025

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Reading Poetry in the Language Arts.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Elementary Education; *Language Arts; Language Usage; *Literature Appreciation; *Poetry; Reading Aloud to Others; Reading Improvement; Reading Material Selection; Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

An important type of reading for elementary age pupils is to read poetry. Pupils need to experience reading and writing different kinds and forms of poetry. There are rich meanings and messages in poetry. The novel use of words adds to the learning repertoire of pupils. There should be poems for pupils to read that deal with diverse topics and genres. The poems should be on the appropriate reading levels for individual pupils for maximum achievement to take place. The teacher needs to read poetry frequently to pupils in an enthusiastic way. Each pupil may wish to collect his or her favorite poems for enjoyment and future reference. Pupils need to become motivated through the use of different stimuli in order to read and write more poetry. For selected pupils, reading much poetry has been a way of increasing skills in learning to read more proficiently. (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

READING POETRY IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

An important type of reading for elementary age pupils is to read poetry. There are pupils who love to read poetry and unfortunately others either are neutral or react negatively to its reading. My hope in this writing is that all pupils will read and react more positively to diverse forms of verse and their contents. Pupils in classrooms where I have supervised student teachers and cooperating teachers are somewhat eager to express their opinions about the study of and writing of poetry. Some of the recorded comments I have written down of these opinions include

1. I do not understand what is written.
2. I would rather read stories from library books.
3. The language used is confusing.
4. I like to read poems that rhyme.
5. I would rather do something else than read.
6. I like poetry that has animal content.
7. I like to read poetry and other literature.
8. I do not like to memorize poetry.
9. I feel that the words used in poems are difficult to understand.
10. I wish more time would be given to the study and reading of poetry.

From the above comments, it is quite obvious that there are mixed feelings toward the reading of poetry. Certainly, the teacher will need to establish objectives in which each pupil learns to love the studying and reading of poetry. This can be a difficult task and yet the teacher needs to try to get pupils actively engaged in units of study pertaining to poetry in the elementary school. I would suggest that a major goal of instruction should be to assist pupils to love and appreciate poetry. Additional objectives include obtaining meaning and understanding of poems read, desiring to write different forms and types of poems, working harmoniously with others in reading and writing of poems, increasing

vocabulary development through poetry writing, improving reading skills in word recognition and comprehension (Ediger 1997), relating poems read to different curriculum areas in the elementary school, building and developing background information to use in diverse subject matter areas in the curriculum, as well as increasing in the desire to learn, grow, and achieve. To write quality poetry, the pupil needs background information. The teacher needs to have a rich learning environment in the classroom. I believe in having many learning centers in the classroom so that learners may look at what is at each center. Objects, items, audio-visual aids, realia, and library books with other print materiels need to be located at each of these centers. The teacher needs to introduce each center briefly as well as motivate and assist pupils to move forward with achievement in poetry writing. Pupils need to browse through books containing poetry First, lets take a look at how the poetry curriculum may be organized.

Organizing the Poetry Curriculum

Teachers need to think of how to organize the poetry curriculum so that more optimal pupil achievement is in evidence. I have observed teachers teach entire units on poetry as a separate subject. The unit involved here may be entitled "Reading and Writing Poetry." Why do selected teachers teach separate units on poetry? Depth teaching might then be involved in that the focus is upon poetry only in its many forms. Here, the teacher may have pupils concentrate on rhymed, unrhymed but with a certain number of syllables per line, and no rhyme and no specific number of syllables per line. When readiness is in evidence, pupils may compare and contrast diverse forms of poetry studied and written. Ingredients in poetry writing may also be emphasized here with imagery, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. In the separate subjects approach of units on poetry in the elementary school, pupils may focus in depth upon what goes into the different forms of verse to emphasize poetry in its diverse manifestations.

For example, in studying imagery, pupils may learn in depth what

is involved here with metaphors and similes. Thus, pupils need to understand that metaphors do not require words including *like* and *as*. Creative comparisons may then be made: The moon, a yellow flame of gold, moves rapidly in space. Here, the moon is compared creatively with, "a yellow flame of gold." This is a metaphorical comparison.

A second form of imagery is to use similes whereby the words "like" and "as" are used to make creative comparisons: The clouds in the sky look like sheep walking on blue grass. The simile here is ""like sheep walking on blue grass." Thus, a creative comparison is made between "The clouds in the sky," and "sheep walking on blue grass."

In addition to the separate subjects poetry curriculum, the teacher may also wish to correlate reading and writing poems with different curriculum areas. Here the teacher attempts the best possible to have pupils directly relate each poem studied to social studies, science, mathematics, and the language art areas. Thus, if a social studies unit on the Civil War is being taught, the teacher may assist pupils to read and study literature written during this war. Social Studies and literature are being correlated. Perceiving relationship of knowledge by pupils is a major goal of the correlated curriculum. There are fewer separate subjects to be taught in a given day. The elementary school curriculum tends to be crowded as it is and teachers do welcome certain curriculum areas to be correlated.

In correlating social studies and poetry, one pupil in the fifth grade wrote the following quatrain containing patterns of rhyme:

The Holy Land
Moslems, Christians, and Jews
Each have their own unique views
Mosque, Church, or Temple
Religion is taught as an example.

When pupils perceive that knowledge is related, it becomes easier to remember what had been learned. Why? One idea obtained triggers off others that are related. In a separate subjects poetry curriculum, the

pupil may perceive content in isolation and thereby not sense that facts, concepts, and generalizations can be learned as a unity or as ideas related to each other. There are fewer separate subjects to teach if correlation of content is in evidence.

A third way of organizing the poetry curriculum is to stress an integrated curriculum. Here, the teacher leans upon social studies, science, mathematics, and literature, among other academic disciplines, to provide content for poems written by pupils. Each academic discipline tends to become blurred with the integrated curriculum. Pupils then have even greater chances of understanding how knowledge can be related. Many educators would argue that pupils here should retain subject matter in memory longer due to using it and in this case not being a separate subject.

How the teacher wishes to organize the poetry curriculum depends upon many factors. These include the number of curriculum areas taught which can be emphasized satisfactorily as related by the teacher. Sometimes the integrated curriculum is also called the interdisciplinary approach for organizing instruction.

One pupil wrote the following triplet with all ending words rhyming and indicating an interdisciplinary curriculum:

The Dome of the Rock in the Holy Land
The Dome of the Rock has an octagonal design (mathematics)
It is used for worship by the Moslems as a sign (social studies)
With all of its beauty viewed by yours and mine (art).

The poetry curriculum needs to be carefully developed with quality objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures. In making these three decisions, the teacher also needs to think of organizations such as the separate subjects, the correlated, and the integrated approach in teaching and learning.

Alliteration and Onomatopoeia in Poetry Writing

Pupils with teacher guidance should learn to use alliteration in poetry writing. Poets use this device frequently in writing. Alliteration tends to stress two or more sequential words that begin with the same sound. Learners find it fascinating to create verse whereby the two or more initial sounds are the same in an ordered way. A committee of three children collaborated on writing the following containing alliteration:

The Dead Sea in the Holy Land

With salty sea water at sight
And low level elevation of land
I find the dear Dead Sea to lack life.

I feel that writing poetry with alliteration assists pupils in recognizing the role of phonics in reading. Creatively determining words that start with the same sound stresses sounds, not spelling. For example, the words cent and sent have identical sounds but these words are spelled differently with the initial consonant sound.

Another device that poets use in writing poetry is onomatopoeia. Here, words used must make the sounds that one hears in the natural environment. If one throws a rock into the water, the sound made is similar to splash! Thus, the word splash makes that sound, in degrees, when a rock is thrown into the water. A pupil I observed while supervising student teachers in the public schools wrote the following containing onomatopoeia in a science unit of study:

The Sound of Wind

Why does the wind sound like swish, swoosh, slosh, slash, and spash?
The unequal heating of the earth's atmosphere makes for movement of air
The movement of molecules through the air say travel, move, and go!

The underlined words in the above poem seem to indicate in degrees the sound of wind. The pupil has included onomatopoeia in the first line only of this poem.

Poems That Rhyme

I have taught elementary school pupils who felt that all poems rhyme. One important kind of poetry does rhyme. Others do not. The following are examples of rhymed verse which pupils may write when readiness is in evidence (See Ediger, 1988). Couplets contain two lines with ending words rhyming, such as in the following poem:

The Forty Niners
The Forty niners went to the West
To look for gold with great zest.

One teacher mentioned to me while supervising student teachers that the whole word method only or largely was used when she attended public schools. Major phonics learnings came from studying rhymed verse. In her school, the teacher would have pupils brain storm ideas on how many words would rhyme with a particular word printed on the chalkboard. These listed words were then to be used in poetry writing.

Triplets have three lines with all ending words rhyming. From a brain storming session on ideas about the zoo, a a committee of three wrote the following triplet:

The Zoo
I like to visit the zoo to see large lions
We have studied these animals in science
They live in a few nations with different biomes.

The quatrain was discussed above and needs a little review. Quatrains have four lines with lines one and two rhyming as well as lines

three and four rhyming. Sometimes, all ending words rhyme of the four line poem. A dyad of two pupils wrote the following within a unit of study:

An Inventor

Thomas Edison invented the light bulb with much work
His efforts helped all to see better at night with little quirk
The light bulb was here to stay
And make life better with more pay.

Selected pupils like to work together with others in the classroom in writing a poem. The number here needs to be kept small so all may participate such as a dyad of two members or a maximum of four pupils writing collaboratively.

Limericks are a very popular kind of poem for pupils to write. Generally, this poem starts with the words "There once was a----- The limerick has five lines comprised of a couplet and a triplet. Lines 1, 2, and 5 form a triplet whereas lines 3 and 4 form a couplet.

Kindness

There once was a man in a large city
Who felt sorry for poor people in a pity
He raised much money for the poor
And felt he needed much more
That wonderful man worked on a committee.

It is excellent if pupils volunteer to write poetry; however there are learners who do not participate with intrinsic motivation and may need to be assigned to a committee which is highly accepting and provides for all pupils to succeed.

Unrhymed Verse

Many pupils are surprised that there can be unrhymed poetry

which provides for interest and purpose on the part of the learner. They find free verse to be challenging and relatively easy to write. After all, pupils should enjoy reading and writing poems. Intrinsic motivation is important in all learning as an ideal. Many pupils are motivated from within and do not need inexpensive prizes as rewards for learning. For those lacking intrinsic motivation, the teacher may need to use an award system and, hopefully, pupils will wean themselves from extrinsic motivation as time goes on. I do not count verbal praise as extrinsic motivation. Honest praise is good for pupils and should be used judiciously. I believe that quality learning takes place best with intrinsic motivation, but a few pupils will need rewards and prizes as motivators. Two pupils wrote the following haiku containing five-seven-five syllables for each of three lines:

The Goat
The goat is a joy (five syllables)
In the grass among the trees (seven syllables)
A lovely sight seen!

A tanka has two more lines, each having seven syllables:

The Tall Camel
I like to see far (five syllables)
Where camels roam in deserts (seven syllables)
And chew scarce rare feed (five syllables)
Up, away go the camels (seven syllables)
Where grass and water abound. (seven syllables)

Writing Free Verse

Free verse is a very openended kind of poetry. There does not have to be any rhyme nor syllabication. Many pupils enjoy brain storming lines for free verse. The following free verse was composed by four pupils collaboratively:

The Shepherd

Alone with the sheep in the field
plays on the flute to maintain entertainment
watches and cares for each and every sheep
is careful with the little lambs
herds the animals to good grass
throws stones at cement fences
does not mind being alone
relishes time with the sheep
ever faithful and kind.

Conclusion

Pupils need to experience reading and writing different kinds and forms of poetry. There are rich meanings and messages in poetry. The novel use of words adds to the learning repertoire of pupils. There should be poems for pupils to read that deal with diverse topics and genres. The poems should be on appropriate reading levels of individual pupils for maximum achievement to take place. The teacher needs to read poetry frequently to pupils in an enthusiastic way. Each pupil may wish to collect his/her favorite poems for enjoyment and future reference. Pupils need to become motivated through the use of different stimuli in order to read and write more poetry. For selected pupils, reading much poetry has been a way of increasing skills in learning to read more proficiently.

References

Ediger, Marlow (1997), The Modern Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 206.

Ediger, Marlow (1988), Language Arts Curriculum in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 29-36.

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/REC
2805 E. Tenth Street
Smith Research Center, 150
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2nd Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)
PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE.